FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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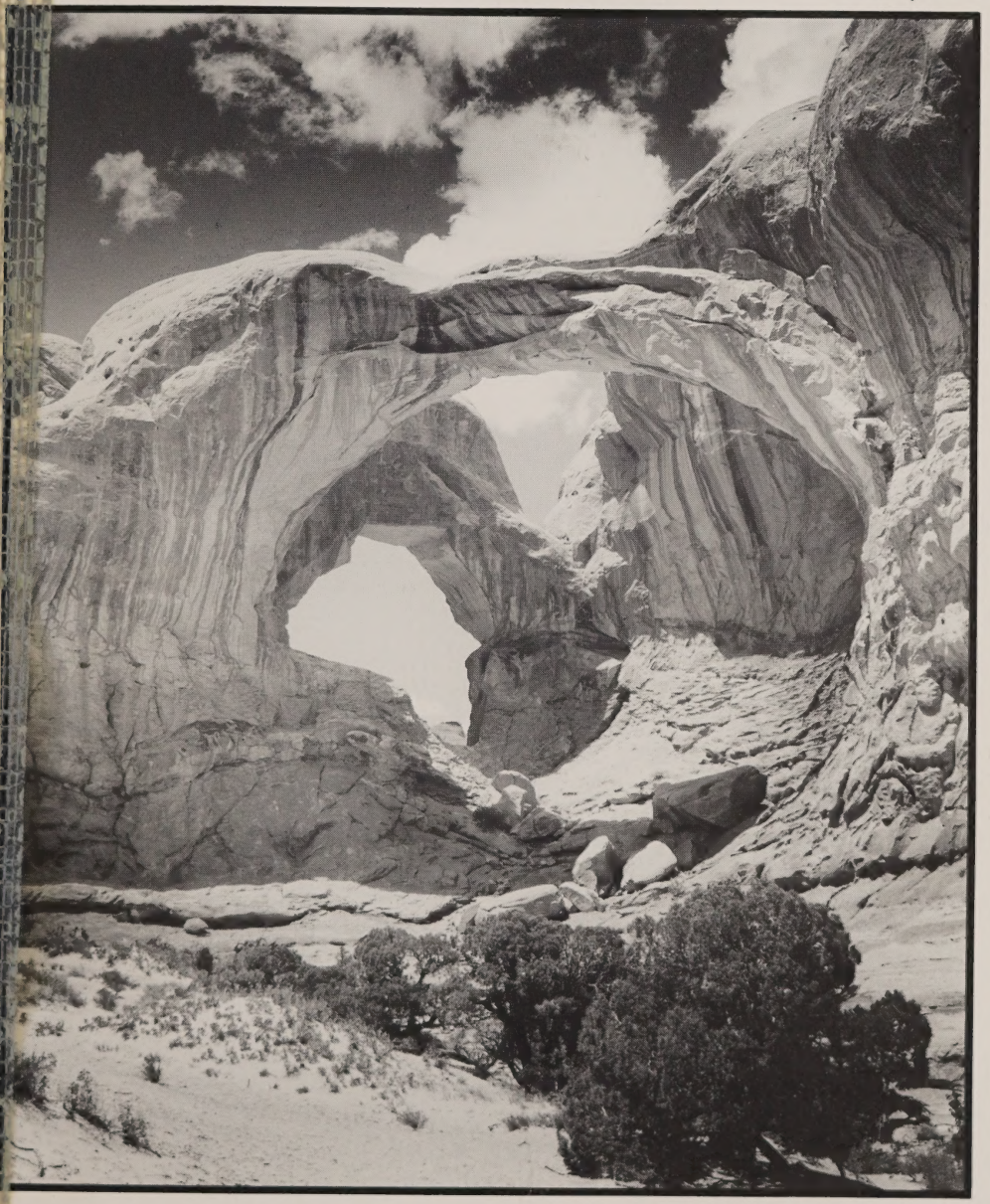

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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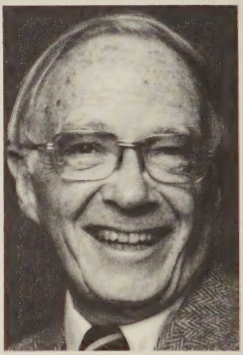
Cover photograph by Robert F. Campbell: Utah; Arches National Park; Double Arch in the Windows Section.



Am I following the right path? Is what I'm doing with my life helping humanity? The planet? Or just me and my family? Maybe I should work in the inner city, or the Brazilian rain forest, where I could really make a difference. But what about my obligations to my family? And how much difference can one person make, anyway? I hear (and ask) those kinds of questions frequently.

One night recently, a group of us was discussing what it means to lead a spiritual life. A scientist at a major research university shared with us his pain at the poverty and violence in the world and his heartfelt need to do more to help relieve the suffering than he was able to do in his present job.

A doctor, whose humanitarian research involves the killing of laboratory animals, told us he was unable to follow the first of the five Buddhist precepts—not to condone any act of killing in the world—because of his work. Deep reflection on the precept, and on the implications of killing animals "for the good of humanity," was leading him to wonder if that justification was not a step on a path that could lead to a Holocaust type of rationalization. He is thinking of giving up his research and taking up the practice of pediatrics.

As we sat in a circle and reflected with him on the moral problems of "right livelihood," as Buddhists call it, a consensus gradually emerged.

One of our members, a Buddhist nun, suggested that maybe it wasn't necessary to go to the rain forest in order to be a force for good in the world. Might it not be as compassionate and world enhancing to hug a homeless man as to hug a tree, she wondered? And what about helping a single mother find a job or adequate housing? Or finding a home or a safe haven for a lost and frightened dog? "Engaged Buddhism," she noted, means to be engaged right here, right now.

A Jungian psychoanalyst, whose patients struggle daily with painful questions about their lives, offered the insight that every day we make a multitude of seemingly small decisions that ultimately add up to the kind of person we are.

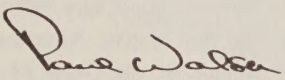
We can smile and cheer up whomever we are looking at, or refrain from smiling and make life that much less pleasant for ourselves and for

them. We can nurse a hurt ego and ruin the better part of a day, or week, or month, or we can let got of our anger and make peace with ourselves and our friends again. We can withhold our love and understanding when a child, a boss, a spouse, or a special friend is not as we wish her or him to be—or we can open our hearts and make someone else's life, as well as our own, that much happier.

The small decisions we make constantly reverberate throughout the web of life. We make most of them without thinking. Yet the sum total of our decisions—what we eat, what we buy, how we treat others—makes a significant difference—to everyone and everything that lives and breathes on this magical planet we all share.

There are a thousand ways to "do good" and they don't all have to be big, dramatic efforts. Our salvation, and this planet's, lies in doing what we are called to do, what our heart tells us is right and our circumstances make possible, right here, right now.

All we can do is take one step, and then another, every day, until it becomes a path—a path of the heart that leads to our doing the most good that is in us to do. Following that path to the best of our ability, we truly become spiritual heroes and heroines.



Paul Walsh

Native Americans from the great tribes that once graced the American landscape made an extraordinary contribution to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago this past summer which went largely unnoticed and deserves to be remembered.

The Native Americans brought a loving, communal, inclusive spirit to the Parliament which was a marvel to watch and, from a secular perspective, almost incomprehensible. Somehow, through the grace of The Great Spirit and the dignity of the human spirit, they rose above, transcended, overcame, or moved beyond the incalculable suffering they have experienced at the hands of the white man throughout the course of the last four centuries, behaving as though they had forgotten it all in a gesture of all-but-impossible nobility.

These courageous Native American men and women did not say a word about the atrocities, the near-genocide, inflicted on them in this country. Instead, they joined in the events of the Parliament with warm and open hearts, worshipping, praying, chanting, sharing their sacred rituals, drumming, passing on knowledge about their ancient ways of relating to God, as though they felt no animosity toward anyone.

This extraordinary, cooperative, giving spirit communicated in everything the Native Americans did and said a feeling of the *Mysterium Tremendum*, the Great Mystery which lies at the heart of every religion in the world. These wounded people accomplished what Martin Luther King so passionately implored us all to do: they *forgave the enemy*.

About two thousand of us were in a large conference room when a disagreement broke out between representatives of two religions. Within minutes, a Native American circle dance was initiated on center stage, creating a distraction so powerful and inspiring that it moved the entire audience to participate in the healing dance by holding hands and weaving up and down the long aisles in a gesture of reconciliation.

It became obvious at that moment that the course of history could be changed and the 51 religious conflicts now raging on our planet could be stopped if enough individuals and groups would do what the Native Americans did in Chicago this summer: let go of painful—even agonizing—memories, and "forgive the enemy."

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

Lisa Smith

A disciple asked, "What can I do to be acceptable to God?" The teacher answered, "Search the deepest inclination of your heart and follow it."
Eastern Wisdom Tradition

Acquire inward peace, and a multitude around you will find their salvation.
St. Seraphim

All people may take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
Ps. 36.7

All the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people say *Allah* and devote themselves to Allah. Those who heard this word by the ear alone let it go out by the other ear; but those who heard it with their souls imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated their hearts and souls, and their whole being became this word. They were made independent of the pronunciation of the word; they were released from the sound of the letters. Having understood the spiritual meaning of this word, they became so absorbed in it that they were no more conscious of their separate selves.
Islamic Mystical Tradition

What though I die hourly,
I have each time found a better life.
Angelus Silesius

It isn't necessary to go out to the slums to find poverty and a lack of love. There is someone who suffers in every family.
Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Great is the power of *teshuvah* (repentance), for it brings healing to the world. Even if only one person does *teshuvah*, both that individual and the entire world are forgiven.
Babylonian Talmud

O, God, our Lord, how great your name throughout the earth!
Ps. 8.1

Enchantment at Little Salmon Creek

WAYNE SIMSIC

A place of magic and power, a home for the soul, a drama that engages and fills the heart: the author found all this at the side of a shining creek.

There are places in nature that attract our attention because of their magic and power. They can make the blood rush and the consciousness expand—they are places that we do not so much choose but feel drawn to in order to work out, in some inexplicable way, the meaning of our lives. Eventually, the place itself becomes sacred, alive with the stories of our spiritual adventure, and we know we have a home for the soul.

I discovered a place like this in the Allegheny Forest. To get there you drive a steep, gutted, logging road into a valley which, no matter how many times I enter it, seems lost and hidden. The mountains flanking the valley hover around a white slip of water, Little Salmon Creek. Standing on the logging road and looking down the slope of a hill you can see the creek in various places emerging from the forest interior long

The author of Earthsongs: Praying with Nature, *Wayne Simsic is on the faculty of Ursuline College in Cleveland, Ohio. His article is adopted for* Fellowship in Prayer *from* Natural Prayer: Encountering God in Nature *(Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, Tel. 1-800-321-0411).*

enough to catch the sun in its froth before it disappears into the dark foliage. The banks bend and contort in an erratic dance as they make their way into the thick of the forest.

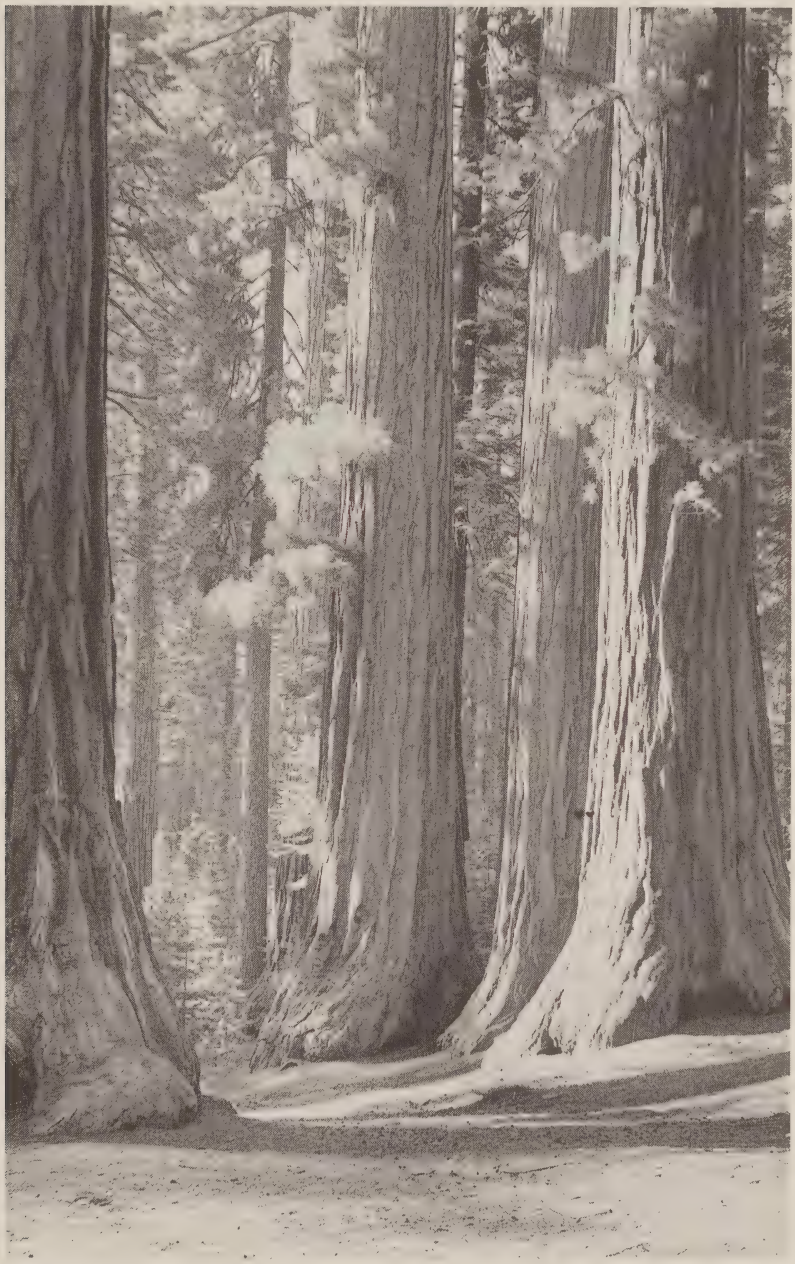
The light and shadow of the forest have become the light and shadow of my heart.

Thomas Merton says somewhere that when a solitary inhabits a particular place for a time the place itself becomes one with the solitude. This place along Little Salmon Creek has woven itself into my prayer and solitude. The light and shadow of the forest have become the light and shadow of my heart. This was a surprising feeling for someone who expected to find only peace and quiet. The forest engaged my heart and the result was drama; even the limitations of being in one place did not restrict the drama. Returning again and again, in and out of season, I felt like a hermit who returns to a cave knowing that the cave itself will teach solitude.

Sitting beside the creek this afternoon, I allow the motion of the water to capture my attention and lure my mind into lazy swirls and long sloping curls. My eyes drift with the water's changing pattern and are lulled by the slow rhythm. I am lost in the sweep of a small wave or the twirling of a floating leaf—my consciousness so absorbed that it flows along the bank with ease, discovering a way into the dark stillness of my being.

Nothing much happens along the side of creeks but maybe this is the reason they are able to drift into our hearts and minds and suggest something more. Remember the creeks of childhood? They pulled us along their banks to wider worlds promising innocence and mystery. They taught the rise and fall of the earth and captured the imagination, bearing us away in a liquid babble. The creeks of childhood were shallow, but mysteries swirled over their rocky bottoms.

I sit beside Little Salmon Creek and lose myself in the dazzling sunlight leaping on the water. I follow its winding bank because it offers a path into the mountains and into the sifting sediment of my own spiritual life. This creek has become so much a part of my consciousness that it has begun to reflect the longing that courses through my veins. When I leave it I find its song ringing in the depths of my memory.



Robert F. Campbell

A story from "The Transmission of the Lamp," a text filled with Zen stories and sermons, illustrates the role that nature can play when a person feels a connection to the spiritual life. "A monk eager to learn Zen addressed his master and said: 'I have been newly initiated into the brotherhood. Will you be gracious enough to show me the way to Zen?' The master replied: 'Do you hear the murmuring sound of the mountain stream?' The monk answered: 'Yes, I do.' The master said, 'Here is the entrance.' "

In Zen teaching the inner life merges with the mountain stream, the flower, or the stone and becomes a spiritual path. This does not issue from any reflection or activity on our part, but flows from the awareness of a complete identification with the natural world that undercuts all intellectual distinctions. It is unnecessary to project a divine importance on things but simply allow them to be what they are; their very existence will give off a radiance.

As I relax at the side of the creek, my life ripens and my consciousness widens in the warmth of the afternoon sun. I remind myself to be present to the call of birds, the gurgle of the stream, the rising of the sun, and take full pleasure in the experience. This is enough; nothing more is necessary. A scholar and a Zen master were walking along a mountain path where a wild laurel was blooming. "The master said: 'Do you smell the fragrance of the flowering tree?" The scholar responded: 'Yes, I do.' 'Then,' declared the master, 'I have hidden nothing from you.' "

Imagine having the patience to remain in a landscape you love for a long period of time, to allow nature's supple rhythms to pervade mind and body. The heart merges with the landscape; from dawn to dusk you lose yourself in a mysterious rhythm. Slowly, a transformation occurs; anxieties are healed and thoughts begin to flow easily and spontaneously, skirting the edges of chaos. There is a greater ability to concentrate and an unexpected rush of creative power. More important, consciousness flows to a deeper level where the things in ordinary life no longer hold attraction. This, you realize, is the beginning of a contemplative state where the pressures of the practical world become a faint memory and the intuitive qualities of the soul begin to awaken.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

I received some good news recently and got a swelled head. I walked on air, then I crash-landed. Could I have done better with my good news? Could you share any thoughts you have with us on this?

Thank-you,
Crash-Landed

Dear Crash-Landed,

Thanks for writing to me with your question, and congratulations on your good news. Most of us, I'm sure, have received good news at one time or another. Many also may be wondering whether perhaps we may have squandered our good news. Let me reassure all of you. Good news cannot be squandered or wasted. You can't get it wrong. Good news is fun. You may get a swelled head, you may get swept off your feet and land on your belly. Just relax and enjoy it all. It's a natural reaction. Enjoy the ride. If you land on your belly, just catch your breath, dust yourself off, and quiet yourself till the earth stops twirling. Good news adds meat to the Kibbles of life. It brings balance. We all know for a merry life two bowls are best. One bowl for water, one for Kibbles. A one-bowl life is soggy. If we endure bad news, we may as well be on the prowl for good news, too. I'm glad to have the opportunity to offer you years of experience in the celebration of good news.

How do I make the acquaintance of good news? Smack in the middle of a ho-hum afternoon, like a dream come true, my buddy Barbara shows up. Even from a sound sleep I scramble to my feet, shake myself vigorously, wag my tail, trot over to her, bark, twirl, hold my head high for a pat, then lick her nose. More good news? Chicken. The sound of Cheerios leaving the box, a leash dangling from a human hand, the bed

of my best beloved, a returning human, an unguarded, just-emptied aluminum tin of macaroni-and-cheese sauce.

Before we can receive good news, it is helpful to be able to recognize it. You'd be surprised at how good news can go undetected without careful vigilance. For those who rarely experience it, perhaps the problem may be an inability to smell good news when your nose is in it. Be on the prowl for it. Expect it, especially in your heart. Twirl in place often, fervently, and at regular intervals. Be alert, then nap.

Once you can recognize good news, what do you do with it? Enjoy it, share it, wear it, take it under the couch with you. Roll good news up in the folds of your blanket, or bury it in the backyard. Hide your good news in the couch cushions, guard it, flaunt it, wrestle with it, play with it, chew on it, lick it, relish it, keep your good news between your two front paws. Carry your good news everywhere in your mouth, bark about it to the front door. Brag about it to an old trusted buddy. Use your good news on a day when you're feeling a little down and you need a lift.

To obtain the long-lasting benefits that good news can bring, it must not only enter our heads, but our hearts as well. Good news that goes only to the head leads to confusion, false or inflated expectations, and swelling. Swelled heads are a common occurrence with good news, and can be successfully tempered and managed by keeping an equally opened heart as well. How does one prepare the heart for good news? Romp, run, leap, scamper, wag, pant, and twirl. These activities strengthen the heart muscles and raise the Glee Probability Quotient necessary for the spreading and growing of good news. The more you ready your heart for glee, the more glee your heart will absorb.

Another way of enhancing the benefits of good news is the Bearer-Sharer approach. Be the Bearer of good news as much as you can wherever you go. Most souls really appreciate an honest-to-goodness tail-wagging cheery piece of good news to wrestle with and chomp on. Try not to disappoint these folks. Share good news. It grows when spread around.

Scientific studies prove there is no one single proper and correct way to react to good news. For some, leaping up and walking on air makes good news more fun; for others, walking on air feels too risky. My own unabashed joy at good news provides a reprieve from lonelies and flea discomfort. There is nothing better for the temporary relief of flea problems of all kinds than a respectable, solid piece of good news.

Matt Zarzecki

Even with the obvious benefits that good news brings, there are some aspects of good news to be watchful for. For those not used to dealing with a lot of good news, the elements of surprise and disbelief can rob us of our well-earned happiness and pleasure if we are not watchful. With good news comes the increased probability of being swept off our paws and skidding to earth on our bellies. Practice landing as gently as possible if you can.

Although good news can be transforming, expecting more from it than it is able to really bring us may lead to unnecessary disappointment. Recently, I received some good news myself, but it didn't turn me from a meditating monk into a social butterfly. It didn't cure my flea problem. Good news left me a gleeful, meditating mutt with a deepening pleasure in chicken and an increased biscuit supply. I still spend a lot of time down in the basement or under the couch.

You may encounter another pitfall of good news when you share your good news with someone and they appear to you to be totally unimpressed by it. Right in your face. You, in sharing, need to be clear about your own reasons for sharing good news. If you're sharing your good

news as a way of bragging, that's fine as long as you realize it. If you're sharing good news to get your head patted, make sure you are sharing good news with souls who pat heads.

If you're sharing good news with someone in order to elicit their love and approval for you, be advised: see to it that you have your own love and approval first. It just doesn't always work out the way you might like it to. The sharing of good news to get love and approval from someone else can be disappointing. Try not to fill your own food bowl from someone else's. Get your Kibbles fresh from the bag.

In closing, I leave you with a suggestion for keeping the ground fertile and ready for good news to bloom and grow in. Every day, spend time dwelling on all the things in life that spell good news for you. Remain watchful, hopeful, alert, and on the prowl for a whiff of good news anytime, anywhere.

Hoping all of your news is good.

Faithfully,
Angela

"Ask Angela" Headed For Best Sellerdom!

We are delighted to announce to Angela devotees and spiritual seekers all over the world that Angela's sage advice will soon appear in book form. Published by Continuum Publishing Company, under the title *Ask Angela: Answers to Life's Mysteries from Man's Best Friend*, by Angela, with Barbara Ackerman, the 120 page paperback will sell for $9.95. You may order your copy by calling the publisher's toll-free number: 1-800-937-5557.

The Hermit's Song

I wish, O Son of the Living God, O ancient, eternal King,
For a hidden little hut in the wilderness that it may be my dwelling.
An all-grey little lake to be by its side.
A clear pool to wash away sins through the grace of the Holy Spirit.
Quite near, a beautiful wood around it on every side,
To nurse many-voiced birds, hiding it with its shelter.
A southern aspect for warmth, a little brook across its floor,
A choice land with many gracious gifts such as be good for every plant.
Raiment and food enough for me from the King of fair fame, And I to be sitting for a while praying God in every place.

From the Celtic Tradition

A Native American Prayer Before Meals

O Great Spirit, now that I am about to eat,
give my thanks to the beasts and birds
whom You have provided for my hunger,
and pray deliver my sorrow
that living things must make a sacrifice
for my comfort and well-being.
Let the feather of corn spring up in its time
and let it not wither but make full grains
for the fires of our cooking pots,
now that I am about to eat.

An Irish Blessing

With the first light of sun
God bless you
When the day is done
God bless you
In your smiles and in your tears
God bless you
Through each day of your years
God bless you.

Rock Ritual XV: Wounded Rocks

ROBERT O'ROURKE

A slender river of hope flows through Bob O'Rourke's lament for Mother Earth.

I watched in horror as a bulldozer gouged the side of a mountain I had long considered a sacred place. It would now become a place for condominiums instead of a look-out where Arapaho and Cheyenne warriors once sat gazing across the prairie at peaceful buffalo grazing. The huge machine lurched and lunged with ruthless, iron blade leaving in its wake crushed pine trees and scarred rocks. One wounded rock, dislodged from its century-old home, cascaded down the slope coming to rest on the trail I was walking.

I hefted the injured rock with both hands and held it gently in my arms. I hurt with the same deep feelings of isolation and helplessness known to all Native American people as over a century ago wave after wave of men and machines swept across the prairies and mountains of their homeland. I wondered if they would have comprehended the impiety of naming the monster on the mountain: "Caterpillar"? Any caterpillar they had observed rambled leisurely across the prairie. Soft and fuzzy creatures metamorphosing into beautiful, soaring butterflies.

Although I felt a sense of utter futility, somehow, holding my rock made me feel less lonely. Loneliness was yet another emotion I shared with the rock and the spirits of the indigenous people which remain forever on the mountain. Spirits inhabit this land. On quiet days I hear them walking along old game trails. Softly, with moccasin-covered feet. In the clouds their drums beat rhythms of the earth. They dance on mountains. One hundred thirty years ago Chief Seattle knew this would be true . . .

> Every part of this soil is sacred . . . Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove . . . Even the rocks which seem to be dead and dumb . . . thrill with memories of stirring events connected with my people . . . Even the little children who lived here and rejoiced for a brief season will love these somber solitudes and at eventide greet shadowy, returning spirits . . . At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent, and you think

A writer, poet, and sculptor, Bob O'Rourke resides in Colorado. His article is illustrated with copies of butterflies drawn by Lisa Smith.

them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

The day became evening . . .

Up on the mountain man and machine silenced their work.

I set the rock beside the trail.

Shadowy spirits sympathetically touched the gash in the mountain—swept over the rock and hoped for the return of butterflies.

Jimmie Lee & Me

AVIS CROWE

A chance meeting, haunting memories, a stunning resolution.

Cotton. Fields of low growing plants stretched out on either side of the highway as we drove home from our Florida vacation, each clutching fluffy white gloves of raw cotton. As I stared out at the passing acres of cotton my mind engaged in free association: Texas, the South, people bent over in the wet southern heat picking cotton, growing old before they ever had a chance to be young, Jimmie Lee .. Ah, yes, Jimmie Lee.

My mind jumped backwards over a decade to 1979, to Americus, Georgia. I was a volunteer at Koinonia Partners, the birthplace of the now world-wide Habitat for Humanity. I was the only woman on the small construction crew that was building low cost houses in town; hard, unfamiliar work for which I was ill-equipped. Jimmie Lee Wood took full advantage of my obvious deficiencies. Especially in the first weeks when I was totally green. The others pretty much accepted me without comment except for an occasional amused observation. Looking at a pile of bent nails someone remarked, 'You can always tell where Avis has been working!' Jimmie Lee was less tolerant, taking every opportunity to let me—and everyone else—know what an inept builder I was. Determined not to let him get to me, I gritted my teeth and forged clumsily ahead. I tried not to take it personally; I was a handy target, plainly unsure of myself.

Jimmie Lee had every right to be scornful. A skilled builder and wood worker himself, Jimmie Lee had been helping Koinonia build houses for years. He saw no possible reason to take on an amateur who also happened to be a middle-class woman only there for a short time. When I started to slow down from fatigue I would catch him looking at me, shaking his head in disbelief. Then he'd give a lecture on the history of the south, adding pointedly that he and his family had had to pick cotton . . . now THAT was hard work! Jimmie Lee carried a large chip on his broad shoulders. He was a big man, and strong, the color of rich, fertile earth. In spite of his beguiling smile I was uneasy around him: I

Avis Crowe is a freelance writer living in Corrales, NM.

was afraid of his strength, afraid of his resentment, afraid of what I suspected was a lot of repressed rage. Yet I sensed another side to this enigmatic man, too. Mostly caustic and cynical, it was he, of all the crew members, who was quick to come and help when I was at the brink of total frustration. He showed me how to hammer a nail in straight and true, and seemed genuinely pleased when I began to get the knack of raking a freshly poured cement driveway, or laying in panels of insulation. I relished his rare grunts of approval. Still, I was uncomfortable around him, uncertain of what he thought of me. I kept my distance, and our exchanges stayed quite superficial. Until one autumn afternoon when we quite unexpectedly found ourselves face to face at the edge of a pecan grove.

In the mid-70's community members had built a small hermitage as a way of encouraging individual retreats. The hermitage, or "retreat shack" as it's more accurately known, is perched on the edge of a hill; a narrow deck and large windows face into the woods giving a feeling of being in the middle of the wilderness. A rickety cot, handmade table and a rusty pot-bellied wood stove were the only furnishings. Whatever was needed in the way of food, water and other 'comforts' had to be carried in.

At first I had used the shack only for a few hours; later I began to experiment with longer periods, working up to a couple of days of fasting and prayer. I discovered the restorative power of periodic time away from routine, and returned often to the simple structure at the edge of the woods. A makeshift signal system ensured privacy—a blue cloth, made from strips of an old sheet, strung between two trees at the edge of the grove meant the shack was occupied. A calendar was kept where the shack could be reserved, but sometimes it was nice just to hike out on the spur of the moment. The blue sheet guarded against stumbling into someone else's private time.

At the time of my encounter with Jimmie Lee, I had settled in for a two-day retreat. Away from the busyness and constant sounds of the community, I relished the late afternoon stillness and looked forward to an extended time of solitude. So I was startled to look up and see Jimmie Lee standing near the entrance. He seemed just as surprised to find me there. After an awkward greeting, he told me he had stumbled onto the shack for the first time a few days before when he was walking with his young son. Curious, he had decided to come back and investigate on his own.

Brooks Walsh

Jimmie Lee was plainly embarrassed and I was both alarmed and annoyed at the intrusion. At the same time I wanted to explain the shack and satisfy his curiosity. I was also still a bit frightened; the more general fear I had felt when we were working together in the company of others was heightened by the gathering shadows of dusk, and the knowledge that there wasn't anyone around for miles. And now Jimmie Lee knew I would be here alone for two days. Another night, long ago I had been raped and the huge shape of a man coming towards me hovered at the edge of memory, kindling the imagination, blocking out trust.

Trying to regain an inner calm, I told Jimmie Lee about the shack, about my wanting to spend time alone now and then to talk to God, and to listen. That I would want to do this at all, much less in a primitive shack with no comforts seemed peculiar to him, yet interesting, too. He plainly needed time to let it all sink in. I was struck by the intensity of his listening; his curiosity was more than just nosiness and seemed to come from a deeper place, a place of kinship that created a space in which we could enter into a real dialogue. For a few brief moments, Jimmie Lee let his guard down: that of God in him and in me connected, somehow, at this unlikely corner of creation. I began to relax as we reached out to one another in a totally different way than the construction site had allowed. It was awkward, and didn't last long. Once he was convinced I was there for the reasons I had stated, and wanted to be alone, he stood for a final look, then turned and walked away leaving me to my solitude. I realized with surprise that I was no longer afraid.

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* * * * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

GUNILLA NORRIS

On the Counter

Taken out, exposed
on the counter,
I am being kneaded.

The air pounded
out of me,
I am turned

inside out. Rolled over
as if by a breaker.
Beached. . .

I am in the open.
Do not leave me now.
Do not hurt me

or give advice
Do not rescue me.
Do not stop this.

It is my true chance.
Upside down I may
take shape. I may become

more of myself,
resilient. Let this happen.
Here on the counter

Kneaded, turned on end
I will become *less*
and somehow more myself.

Hold my hand
Do nothing. Soon
it may happen. Soon

I may be kneaded into shape,
smooth, all of one piece.
able to dream forward again.

Soon you may join me
here on the counter.
And I will know you as myself.

Copyright (c) by Gunilla Norris. For more of her poetry you may call Crown Publishers, 201 East 50th Street, NY, NY 10022 at 800-726-0600, or check your local bookstore. We recommend Becoming Bread *and* Being Home.

On the Counter Again

Taken out, exposed
and cold on the counter,
you are being kneaded.

inside out. Rolled over
in waves.
Everything made visible

on the counter.
I will not leave you now.
I will not hurt you

or give advice.
I will not rescue you.
I will not stop this

It is your true chance.
Upside down you may
take shape. You may become

The air pounded
out of you,
you are turned

more of yourself,
resilient. Let this happen.
Here on the counter

pounded, turned on end.
You will become *less*
and somehow more yourself.

I hold your hand
and do nothing. Soon
it may happen.

You will be kneaded
into shape, smooth,
able to go on again.

We are together here
on the counter and alone.
You will know me as *yourself*.

"Despised Clergy in the Death Camps"

JOHN J. PILCH

For my work-study program in 1960, I was assigned as translator and secretary to Father Henry Malak who lived in the faculty quarters on the Campus of Christ the King College, West Chicago, IL.

Henry had spent six of his first seven years in the priesthood, from 1939 to 1945, as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps at Stutthof, Grenzdorf, Sachsenhausen, and finally Dachau. Priests were identified in the camps by the 22,000 number (his was 22,466), and a "P" on a red triangle sewn on the prison uniform.

Priests and Jews were the two categories of inmates most hated by the Nazis. The *Pfaffen und Juden* were regularly assigned to the same lowliest tasks and routinely beaten at the same times.

Inmates sought escape from the severe beatings, and one day after Christmas, 1941, Henry found his opportunity.

The Nazis were looking for a sculptor, a wood-carver. Henry wanted to volunteer because he had some talent, but his cell-block Secretary would not recommend him.

That night, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, to whom Henry had a deep and fervent devotion since his seminary days, came to his bed. Henry called out her name, but just then someone woke him. It was time to get up.

He and his partner were sent that morning to distribute utensils to cell-block 30.

"Cold today," someone mutters.

"Yes," Henry replies.

"Go to him," an inner voice directs.

Henry objects: "He's not my cell-block Secretary. Besides, he's a communist."

"Go to him," the voice insists.

John J. Pilch, of Catonsville, MD., translated and adapted this reflection for FiP *from Henry Malak's two-volume memoirs,* Despised Clergy in the Death Camps. *Dr. Pilch teaches biblical literature at Georgetown University and is the author of ten books.*

Henry explains to Kurt, the Secretary for cell-block 30, that he wants to enter the competition for the position of wood-carver.

"Too late," he says. "They've already begun the competition."

Then suddenly he says: "Wait. Tomorrow, fall into my group instead of yours. We'll see what we can do."

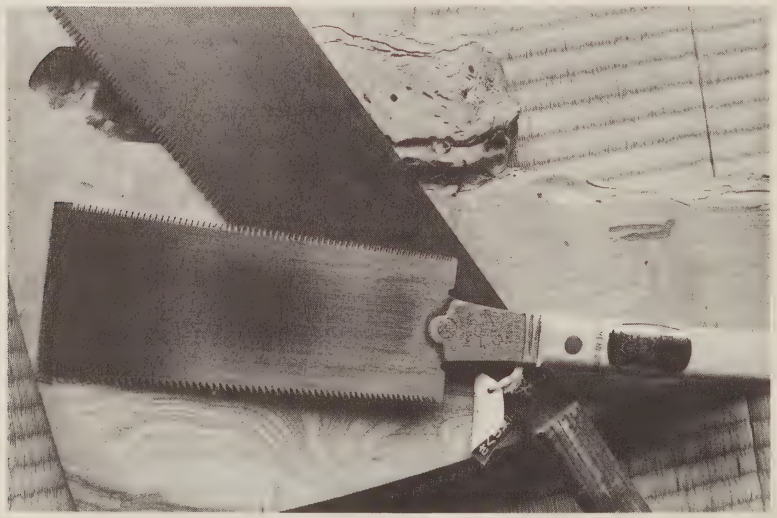
At roll call, Henry whispers his plan to Zdzich, a cynical priest and fellow prisoner.

Zdzich replies: "If you get lucky, then even I will believe in this dainty saint, your friend, who pours flowers down from heaven." (St. Thérèse of Lisieux is known as the Little Flower, in part because she promised after her death to rain a shower of roses upon the earth.) "I'm disgusted that anybody's total piety and religiosity would hang on the folds of the religious garb of Thérèse, or the cord around the waist of St. Anthony."

As always, Henry's response is to pray to his favorite saint. He prays to Thérèse not for himself and the success of his plan, but rather that if she helps it all to work out, he might convert his cynical, "pagan" priest-friend, Zdzich.

Kurt helps Henry enter the competition, but he has already lost a day. This leaves him but one more day to complete his work which, so far, he hasn't even begun!

Worse, he has to borrow the tools of the other twelve competitors,



Tom Dunham

since the competition was limited to this number. Henry was the thirteenth! To top it all off, Henry is assigned to the malicious and impatient Hein.

Hein gives Henry a book of classic models. Henry almost sinks into despair as he searches for one to copy in his carving. He is an amateur, not a professional. He can't carve a classic model.

St. Thérèse whispers that he should create something different, something that would immediately engage a viewer. She smiles as she tells him she doesn't like "ready-made roads to heaven."

Henry begins to carve a *huculka*, the figure of a woman from the Carpathian mountain region of Poland. People in this region are quite skilled in wood-carving.

When he was in the seminary, Henry carved a statue just like this one. His fellow students loved it; his teacher hated it. When it mysteriously disappeared, Henry was uncertain whether some admirer had stolen it, or whether the teacher had burned it.

By ten in the morning, the model is taking shape. And the face on the model is going to be the young and smiling face of Henry's night vision: Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

Hein is impressed with Henry's project, so he assigns Burek, another prisoner to help him.

"Burek, Burek," Henry repeats in his mind. The name is familiar.

"Are you familiar with Tumska Street in Gniezno?" Henry asks Burek, suspecting he might know who this man is.

"Of course I am," replies his helper. "I am Francis Burek, a master wood-carver, specializing in church carvings. My work appears in practically all the churches in the Gniezno diocese."

Henry's recollection of these lovely altars seems to guide his fingers with greater assurance. At his fingertips, Henry's Carpathian mountain girl takes on the detailed features of the face of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

"They'll throw you out of heaven, Thérèse!" Henry mutters to himself.

"What for?"

"For posing as my model!"

"Henry, if only you would look upon me as your model always and everywhere."

"A spiritual model?"

"Yes."

"Don't I try?"

"Too little! But work on. Time is fleeting." St. Thérèse smiles and disappears.

The SS come in to inspect the work and pause by Henry's place.

"What's that?" one of them asks.

Henry explains as well as he can about the Carpathian mountain people.

"Sounds like our Tyrolean people. Can you carve something like that?"

Here in his isolated work room, Henry had a measure of peace, for awhile. He was fed better food and wasn't beaten. The SS men and others came here to talk.

"I think I can," replies Henry with confident assurance.

"Have you studied?"

"I studied . . ." replies Henry while adding in his heart: "Theology." After all, the guard did not ask whether he studied wood-carving.

"Finish your work and prepare for roll-call. Tomorrow the winners will be announced."

The next day, Henry was declared the winner. When they noted his 22,000 number and realized he was a priest, they beat and cursed him. Still, he was given a special pass and assigned to work for Brenner who headed the work-place. But he was warned to not divulge anything to anyone, or they'd give him 50 lashes on his posterior.

"Yes, Henry, you now belong to me," says Hein. "You will take orders from Brenner and Welter and work in isolation, in the stock room. You won't understand anything of this at present, but perhaps later you will. Watch out for Brenner, though. He's a devil."

Here in his isolated work room, Henry had a measure of peace, for a while. He was fed better food and wasn't beaten. The SS men and others came here to talk. Henry overheard and remembered almost everything. He impressed it indelibly on his mind and recorded it later in his memoirs.

Eventually Henry learned that he was sculpting for Hermann Goering, who at the time was building a hunting lodge in the Alps.

And whatever become of his winning model? It was placed in Goering's lodge. After that? Henry didn't know. Did an admiring American

GI take it as a souvenir? Or did the model turn to ashes just like the person for whom this Polish POW priest carved it?

Henry retained in his mind, until the day he died, the image of that statue. Though he didn't know the statue's fate, he was positive his heavenly model knew and would tell him when he met the Little Flower in eternity.

Henry was liberated from Dachau by the Americans who stumbled upon it on April 29, 1945. He ministered for a while to Polish refugees in camps at Mannheim and Heilbronn.

In 1950, he came to America and joined the Franciscan Order, selecting the Polish Province with headquarters in Pulaski, Wisconsin. In the years that followed, he served as editor of a Polish devotional magazine, and gained widespread recognition and popularity as a writer and preacher.

His Polish style was richly beautiful. I enjoyed translating him and sought, unsuccessfully, to imitate that engaging style in my own Polish language publications.

Henry died at the age of 75 on July 19, 1987, at the Motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, in Lemont, Illinois, where he is buried in the Sisters' cemetery.

Rest in Peace, Henry, and enjoy the company of your heavenly friend and model, St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

A Prayer, A Song, and A Stone

GEERY S. HOWE

What would you want to take with you if you were traveling on a bike all the way from the Arctic Circle to Mexico?

"I have exactly 48 hours!" she explained as our counseling session got started. She was going to travel from the Arctic Circle to Mexico on a bike by herself: a life-long dream now only two days away. We both knew it would be the most challenging thing she had ever done—physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. "What do you recommend I do to get ready," she asked me, "other than to pack up my equipment?"

My mind went back to my wilderness expedition days and I started thinking of emergency equipment, secret money stashes, and the value of peppermint candies to lift your spirits when you are cold. But at the end of this mental list, I decided there was a different level of information that needed to be shared that sunny afternoon. Here is what I replied.

I'd say take a prayer, a song and a smooth stone. You are going on a vision quest, a search for new perspectives. If you memorize the prayer, you can call on it in times of great need. The prayer can also ground you and bring forth enough courage to face incredible odds. Whisper it to yourself before you go to bed and when you awaken. You are going to travel through a challenging journey, and prayer can be like a guide and companion along the way.

Next, you will need a song which fills your heart with joy and hope. You will need a song which moves you deeply and brings peace and compassion to your soul. You will need a song because music is the language of all people, all species, the entire earth. You will need a song because every heart has an "ear" inside of it and music like prayer is not limited by distance or time.

Finally, I recommend you carry a smooth stone, because as you pass through your special days, you may feel lost and out of touch with the here and now. Words, sound, prayer will help. Song, music, singing will

In addition to being a writer, Geery Howe is an education and wellness consultant in West Branch, IA.

Robert F. Campbell

help. But a smooth stone, something you can physically grasp, will be your reality check, your reminder to live in the moment. Nights may be long; days can be difficult, but a touchstone can be held throughout it all.

The greatest challenge during a trip like this is greeting each day as new and fresh. Remember that every morning, every evening, every day, we move. Walking, driving, cooking or biking, our bodies are active. And yet, often we feel pushed by time, work or expectations. We feel like we are running from here to there, and back again.

With a prayer, a song, and a stone make sure you greet the dawn of each day in reverence. For this is the only day, only moment, to live. Greet the day and make it an opportunity for rejuvenation where you can release the anxiety, instability or pressures of yesterday. Reconnect with the flow of peace, serenity and synergy. In the morning and evening if you want—meditation can create a special moment of entering into a quiet centeredness where you can open to the beauty around you. A meditation practice will move you more fully into the present moment, aware of your breathing, your movements, and your blessings. It will be an opportunity to shake off the stress and worries of the day and to return to a non-worrying and non-struggling space.

During this journey, live like a dancer. Instead of doing, recovering, and struggling against the storm of change, be the storm. Give yourself permission to flow. When you see something beautiful, a plant, a picture or a candle, feel into the moment and be there with the experience. Your prayer, your song, and your stone will be your constant companions, reminding you that life is best in the present moment. There is no need to rush anywhere because when you do, you are there.

As Joseph Campbell so aptly wrote: "If you follow your bliss [in a responsible way], you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there the whole while, waiting for you, and the life you ought to be living is the one you are living." The primary purpose of living is to show up and enjoy it. We are dancers, learning to be more alive and awake to the present, because the present moment is the most enjoyable, and the only moment in which we can be creative.

Later, we talked about the specifics related to her biking expedition. We laughed and we cried about challenges, trials and tribulations. But in the end, we both knew that a prayer, a song, and a stone can be valuable allies when one makes a fundamental change in their life.

With Thankfulness to Dusty

JUDITH STEIN CHERRY

For this six-year-old black labrador retriever, "every person who shows up is there to love and play with."

Life is difficult, and it seems to me that this is an especially intense time for many people. I know from my own evolutionary process that it is possible to transform the experience of struggle, deprivation and loneliness into one of increasing ease, abundance, friendship, assurance and love by transforming our attitudes. The way we respond to what life brings to us, with acceptance or resistance, is what creates peace or stress, ease or dis-ease. The way I respond to circumstances and people is what makes my life matter to my world. I am discovering that although life is challenging, it can be joyful. And I learned some of this from Dusty.

Dusty was a six-year-old black Labrador retriever who died yesterday. Her life mattered to me because she taught me a great deal about the nature of life and love. Dusty was not "my" dog and, although she was certainly loving and loyal to her owners, she didn't make much of a fuss about the distinction between "them and us" (I always felt like "us").

Dusty had an amazing capacity to forgive and to love unconditionally regardless of circumstances. Sometimes when she was in my care I'd abandon her for several hours. Nevertheless, she always welcomed me enthusiastically. Her unabashed expression of love melted my heart and my agenda no matter how I was feeling beforehand. Her uninhibited affection always caused me to respond in kind. She knew that the secret of receiving all the love you want is simply to offer all the love you have.

My favorite activity with Dusty was to walk on the beach or in the woods. When we were together, her joy was contagious. Each person, smell, bird, each lap of a wave, each rock was totally new, amazing,

A writer with a lifelong spiritual focus, Judith Cherry also practices psychotherapy in Cold Springs Harbor, NY.

Tom Dunham

exciting. When I am alone now, I can recapture this feeling of joy and fullness by remembering to see the simplest things with brand-new eyes.

I also thoroughly enjoyed spending quiet moments with Dusty. She was warm, affectionate, could be still and she never talked when she had nothing to say.

Life can be full and rich for us, too, when we learn to live in the eternal now.

Don't imagine that life was all fun and games for Dusty. She had her challenges just like everyone else. She was found to have bone cancer last summer. She had one front leg amputated and experienced a cycle of chemotherapy. She was quite ill at times.

However, as soon as her energy returned she resumed life with her customary full-hearted spirit. For a while she would stumble and tire since she had to learn to rebalance and to carry most of her weight on the remaining front leg. Since Dusty saw this adjustment as simply the next thing life brought her to do, she did it without wondering why this was happening to *her*. And since she didn't have a timetable to accomplish a particular goal, she experienced no frustration with the process.

Remarkably, she didn't seem to think about what it used to be like to have four legs, feel self-conscious or sorry for herself for having only three, nor did she worry about her prognosis for the future. Her life was full and rich for her until the end of it.

Life can be full and rich for us, too, when we learn to live in the eternal now; when every experience is seen through fresh eyes and open heart and every person who shows up is there to love and play with.

From There to Here

MEREDITH GOULD RUCH

A religious retreat brings a promise of peace and security, silence, joy, and a sense of mystery. But how do we bring contemplative blessings back into daily secular life?

For a while as I approached adolescence, I was fascinated by monastic life. By age twelve I had read every available "over the convent wall" book about lapsed nuns I could find, memorized convent scenes from "The Sound of Music," soaked up each soggy moment of Deborah Kerr's celluloid struggles with Self and Spirit, and loved The Cloisters more than any other museum in New York City.

There was a convent up the block to which my mother, unmindful of my fixation, frequently threatened to send me. I would have happily gone. So what if pre-pubescent Jewish girls from North Jersey weren't eligible for admission.

I eventually outgrew that phase—but not really. What was it about convents, monasteries, cloisters, and later, ashrams? I recently found out when, at age thirty-nine, I moved to be near a yoga ashram in Western Massachusetts and ended up working there for nearly two years. I loved the structure for devotion, the respect for silence, the safety of community, and the pervasive sense of mystery. It was better than my best childhood fantasies about the convent up the block. And because I honestly thought I could experience all that and then leave, I did. I found myself totally unprepared for the sense of profound alienation I experienced upon my return to secular life.

It has been six months since I moved back to where I had lived for eleven comfortable years. These days I'm learning how to create a holy integrated life in the world—how to move from There to Here; what to transplant and what to leave behind.

Context, I've learned, is everything. What works in the more-or-less contemplative environment of that life doesn't necessarily jive with the hustle and bustle of this one. I spent the early months back from my soul

A freelance writer in Princeton, NJ, Meredith Gould Ruch has a private yoga therapy practice under the name of Devika Ruch. She is currently writing about the practice in Hinduism and other religions of taking a spiritual name.

Cliff Moore

sabbatical making peace with what were painful, albeit illuminating, contrasts.

There, scenery and silence made it easier to find God in everything. Here, asphalt and traffic noise challenge my ability to be so expansive. There, I was surrounded by so much unconditional love, I found it relatively easy to see God in everyone. Here, I find my vision clouded by the harried souls I seem to encounter whenever I venture out my front door. There, the structure of ashram life made it easier to be devotional. Here, errands and family responsibilities provide endless distractions and abundant excuses. There, touch was clear and safe. Here, people seem to exist within a fortress of personal space. There, the shared commitments of spiritual community made it easier to connect self with Self; self with others. Here, I have difficulty understanding what people are talking about and why. If my transition sounds like a roller coaster ride, it's because it was; it's less so now. Time is both teacher and healer.

Eventually I discovered that things which worked there did not always work well here. There, hatha yoga was the prescribed solution for virtually everything. Upset? Scared? Happy? Do yoga. When I first returned here, yoga was often more activating than centering so I stopped doing it. I cooked, cleaned, and gardened my way to peace and tranquility. There, sharing with others each new awareness both facili-

tated and reinforced the process of spiritual unfoldment. Here, observing silence for hours or even days at a time, strengthened mindfulness. There, honestly sharing personal concerns fostered a sense of safety and community. Here, a high degree of self-disclosure isn't always welcomed or appropriate. There, I ate meat to counteract the languorous rhythm and flow of ashram life. Here, I returned to vegetarianism to deal with the frazzled pace of my new old life.

I find my vision clouded by the harried souls I seem to encounter whenever I venture out my front door.

And just when I despaired that nothing in the context of that spiritual community had prepared me for this transition, I remembered the power of yoga which, through all its practices, seeks balance and unity in human endeavor. Strength and flexibility? Same thing. There's no light without darkness; no happiness without grief; no here without there. These simple truths surface each time I remember to notice the juxtaposition of inhale and exhale.

When I resurrected my hatha yoga practice, I rediscovered how holding a posture to the edge of discomfort reveals what I do to escape irritation and distress everywhere else in my life. And I rediscovered the power of holding the posture until grief becomes happiness, darkness becomes light, and flexibility becomes strength.

Eventually I discovered that some things worked just as well here as they did there, and that my childhood fantasy of monastic life was something my adult soul could actually experience and hold in my heart forever.

Spirituality and Aging

Youth and Age

Once my hair was shining yellow, falling in long ringlets round my brow, now it is grey and sparse, all lustre gone.

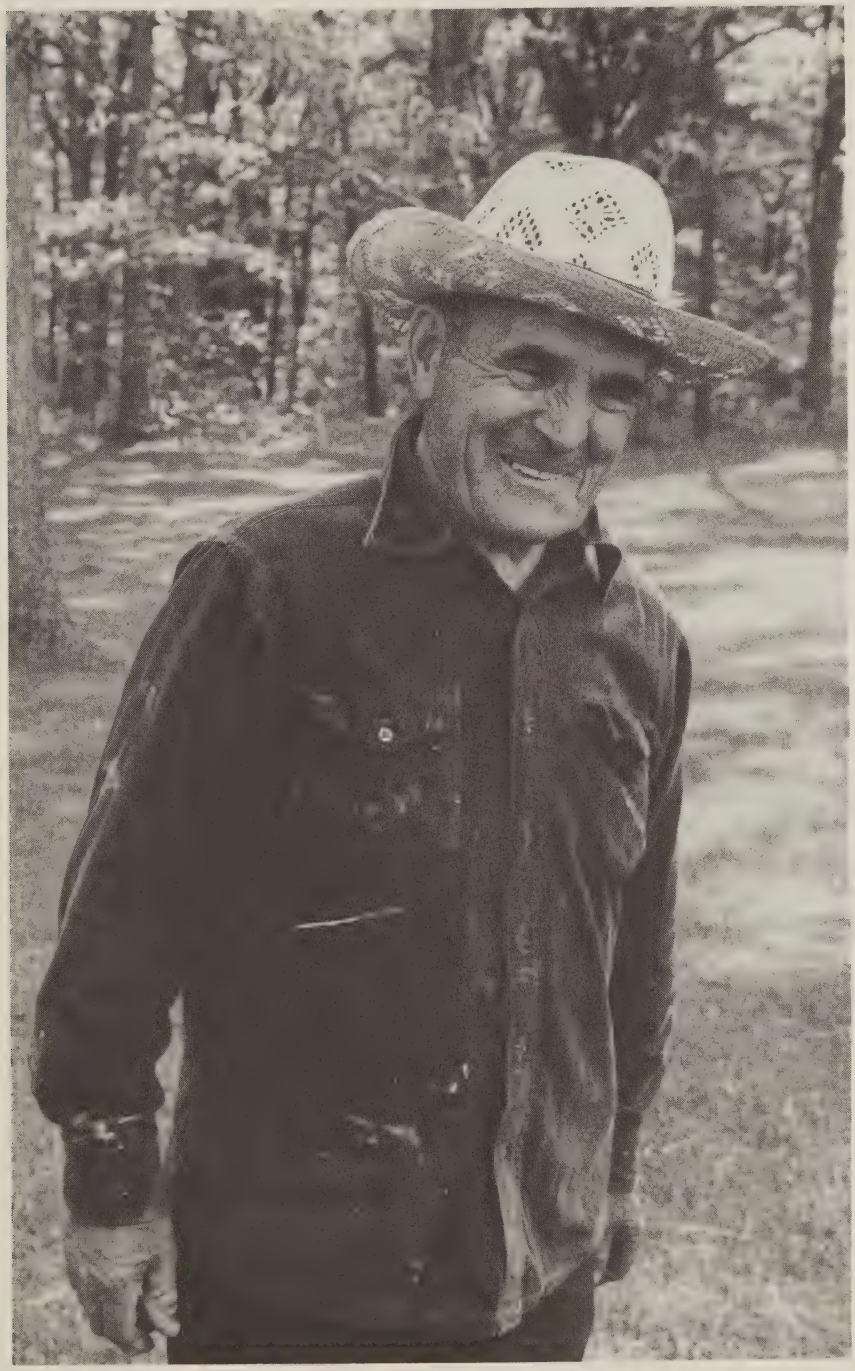
Once as I walked along the lane girls' heads would turn to look at me, now no woman looks my way, no heart races as I approach.

Once my body was filled with desire, and I had energy to satisfy my every want, now desire has grown dim, I have no energy to satisfy even the few desires that remain.

Yet I would prefer chilly age to hot youth, I would rather know that God is near, than have no thought of God in my head.

I have had my day on earth, now I look to eternity in heaven.

From the Celtic Tradition



HEALING WORDS, THE POWER OF PRAYER AND THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE
by Larry Dossey, M.D., Harper San Francisco, 291 pages, hardback, $22.00.

In this fascinating book Dr. Dossey, the best selling author of *Recovering The Soul* and *Meaning and Medicine*, considers the question "Is Prayer a valid healing tool?" After Years of medical practice and the most rigorous kind of scientific research, Dr. Dossey is convinced that the answer is "Yes." What kinds of prayers "work" best? How should one pray? What should one pray for? These and many related issues are treated with experiential awe and scientific exactitude.

What of the future? As more and more scientific evidence accumulates, Dr. Dossey is convinced that the use of prayer "will become the standard in medical practice and that *not* to recommend the use of prayer as an integral part of medical care will one day constitute medical malpractice." An exciting and empowering book! *PW*

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
by Evelyn Underhill, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, England, 1993, 96 pages, paperback, $6.95.

Mysticism
Oneworld, 519 pages, paperback, $11.95.

An anglican novelist and poet born in England in 1875, Evelyn Underhill was the first woman ever permitted to lecture in theology at Oxford University. These beautifully bound new editions of two of her finest books, true 20th century classics, are must reading for serious spiritual seekers of any faith. *Mysticism*, a lyrical and passionate description of the stages of growth in the mystical life, won for underhill lasting recognition as a spiritual giant and the foremost expert on mysticism of her era—and perhaps of the 20th century. *MFG*

I have just read my first copy of *Fellowship in Prayer*, and I am deeply moved by its contents. I've wanted to start a meditation group here in Oaxaca [Mexico], and you have inspired me to move ahead with this venture. Thank you! And thank you for such a needed publication.

Lloyd K. Harvey; Apdo Postal #5 Suc "G"; 68039 Oaxaca; Oax., Mexico

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your wonderful work!

Marian Robbins; Portuga, Portugal

To say that Fellowship in Prayer has fulfilled its purpose (as stated in your inside front cover from your Articles of Incorporation, 1950), is to put it mildly! Your excellent publication has filled the void of many of our patients. Both the State inmates, who are under medical duress, and our own residents have been spiritually fortified by it and look forward to each issue. Our hospital is presently remodeling the Oncology Unit and in the new reading room, your publication will hold top priority. You are truly doing good for others.

S. M. Wendelin; St. Francis Medical Center; Trenton, NJ

I would like to share with you my poem, "Quiet Ways":

God, lead me into quiet ways.
May each daily step bring calm—
A serenity of spirit.
Give of your love to me
So that I may give to others.
Look down, guide, and keep me
In my hours of need and joy.
I know your compassion will surround me.
Your strength will add to mine.
Your love will bring me knowledge, peace,
And the ability to think well
And be eternally grateful for the gift of life.

Helen Briggs; Glendale, CA

I was so excited about the last issue of *FIP* that I woke up in the middle of the night to finish reading it. I suddenly knew in a deep inner place that these writers and readers were all my family and it was time to

write to you and to send you the caring and appreciation of a loving family member. I do thank you!

For some time I have wanted to tell you about our Universal Third Order, because you speak like us, in our language and outlook. We are a little group of 135 Companions, relating to each other through letters and meetings and visits and really feeling a deep closeness.

I have been a Friend [Quaker] since childhood and was nurtured on Thomas Kelly's *Testament of Devotion*, silence and nature. Since the age of 14 when I fell in love with St. Francis but could not accept the Roman Catholic doctrines, I have envisioned a third order for people of all religions. All through the years I studied the mysticism at the heart of all religions, and when I had learned to listen to my inner guidance, I wrote *A Sense of Wonder* (Little River Press, 1984). I feel now that the time has come for a Universal Third Order.

Alison Davis; Hampton, CT

A month ago I thought my marriage of 24 years was over. I left home to drive south to Kentucky intending to give up on the marriage, but one mile from home I turned north, not knowing where I was going. I drove to Our Lady of the Pines, a spiritual center 12 miles from my home. I arrived at lunchtime and there was no one to help me. I sat down in the lobby, and there right at my elbow was a copy of *Fellowship in Prayer*. I took it to a stone altar and after three hours of reading *FiP*—kneeling—I knew I was to go home to talk and work things out. I returned to the lobby and left a $100 bill in the place of *FiP*. I still read it when I need guidance and peace of heart and mind.

Anonymous; Mansfield, OH

I hope that this entry from my journal will be of help to your readers who are dealing with the loss of a loved one:

> I told Mom a few months before she died that she was a part of me. That I could feel her close. That has been ever more true since she left this world. Now there is nothing about her that is separate from me. She is, in a sense, within me, loving the things I love, giving as I give, receiving as I receive, seeing deeply now as I see. I no longer explain myself to her. Somehow she knows; she knows just what I know. She feels what I feel. And together we feel the presence of God. How could I miss her? She is closer than ever.

Letitia Allen; Cambria, CA

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IN MEMORIAM
Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)
Founder
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